
The NLSY79 Child & Young Adult Files

The NLSY79 Child and Young Adult data release includes child-specific information with that from the record of the child's mother. Certain variables have been derived from the longitudinal record of each NLSY79 mother while other information was collected during the administration of the Child assessments and the Young Adult interviews. Detailed information on the types of data available for the NLSY79 children and their mothers can be found by examining the Child and Young Adult field instruments and Youth questionnaires or by searching the documentation on the NLSY79 Child CD-ROM.

This Child and Young Adult data release supersedes all the files created in connection with the 1986-1996 Child data. The current version of this file includes nearly all the child-based variables created for the 1996 file, updating information for children already born by 1996 as well as adding information for those born between 1996 and 1998. The file includes the individual items from the 1986-1998 Child assessments as well as all the 1986-1998 derived raw and normed assessment scores. Additionally, the CD includes all of the Young Adult data, both the personal interview as well as the self-report information, from 1994 through 1998.

As synthesized in Table 6, the NLSY79 Child data file includes information on each child's family background, maternal employment, family income, education, household composition, child care, pre-natal and post-natal care, and all items and scores from the Child assessment data. While some information is cross-sectional, many variables link maternal events or behaviors to the child's life cycle – specified points after, or in some instances, before the child's birth. For example, items C2700.-C3110. provide a continuous profile of the mother's employment in three-month periods ("quarters"), linked to each child's birth from four quarters before the child's birth to 20 quarters after the birth. Thus, one may obtain a picture of maternal employment activity during each thirteen-week interval of the child's life for this time period.

All variables on the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult files are identified by unique identifiers called reference numbers. Reference numbers that start with “C” are used for data items on the Child file, and “Y” numbers for the Young Adult. The “C” numbers (for the Child) and the “Y” numbers (for the Young Adult) appear in each codebook entry and also form the basis of the variable names on the SAS and SPSS control cards that are generated by the extraction procedures on the CD-ROM. These reference numbers are conceptually equivalent to the “R” numbers used in the NLSY79 main Youth documentation and the “C”, “D”, “E,” “F,” and “G” numbers used in earlier Child files.

NLSY79 Child & Young Adult Data on CD-ROM

The Child and Young Adult data are available on compact disc (CD-ROM) media in two versions, for use in a PC/MS-DOS or Windows environment. The structure of the NLSY79 Child 1986-1998 & Young Adult 1994-1998 CD represents a departure from releases prior to 1996. Space constraints have required the separation of the Child data from the longitudinal record of the NLSY79 females. Users who wish to retrieve information from the mother’s record beyond the variables included on the CD will require access to the main Youth CD set. The NLSY79 Child CD-ROM contains all the child-based created variables, all the assessment variables (both “raw” items and created scores), all the 1994 through 1998 Young Adult CAPI and self-report data, and selected constructed variables drawn from the NLSY79 1979-1998 database for main youth respondents¹.

The Child and Young Adult data and documentation are grouped in topical areas of interest (formerly referred to as “record types”) but may be accessed using a variety of search

¹ NOTE: Discussion of constructed variables in this document focuses primarily on the children under age 15. Users should note that the Young Adults are represented in all non-round specific Areas of Interest on the Child-YA CD, such as NATAL, WORKHIST, and CHDBKGN. The Young Adults are also included in the other cross-sectional files from the mother’s records (MHHCOMP) that are based on data for all mothers and thus attached to each of her children regardless of age.

strategies, including “any word in context”, year, reference number, and question number. The search and extraction software on the CD facilitates the process of finding and using the appropriate variables. CD-ROM users should be sure to read the current *NLS CD-ROM Guide*, which accompanies the data and appears on the CD as an .html file. Details on linking data files are found in this document in the section titled “Using the NLSY79 Child & Young Adult Data.”

Constructed Child & Mother-Specific Variables. In addition to the child questionnaire items and constructed assessment scores discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this document, the NLSY79 Child & Young Adult CD contains a number of other constructed variables. Some constructed variables, such as pre and postnatal care and child usual residence, are drawn from child-specific information collected in the mother's main Youth interview. Other elements are constructed from mother-based information that does not vary across children, for example, maternal household composition and family background. These constructed variables, generally found in the following Areas of Interest, CHDBKGN, FAMBKGN, MOMWELL, MHHCOMP, NATAL, WORKHIST, include maternal family background, maternal household composition at each interview, maternal work histories, family educational background, and maternal health. Details on these constructed variables can be found in the *NLS Handbook*. Mother-specific information present on the NLSY79 main data file and on the specially constructed workhistory and geocode main youth CDs can be linked with the child data by case ID.

Constructed Young Adult Variables. In addition to the questionnaire items from the Young Adult CAPI and self-report questionnaire, several constructed variables for Young Adults are available in the current data release (see Table 8). Some of these are available for all YA respondents who were interviewed in 1994, 1996 or 1998, while others are specific to either the 1996 or the 1998 survey round. These variables are all located in the Area of Interest on the CD

called COMMON/KEYVARS. Variables constructed for all young adults include respondent ID (Y00001.00), date of birth, gender, and the ID code of the mother.

Several constructed variables that are cross-sectional in nature are available only for those Young Adults interviewed in 1998. This set includes three age-related variables – age at the YA interview date, age as of 12/31/1998, and age at the birth of the young adult’s first child. Other constructed variables tied to the date of interview include official marital status, cohabitation status, region and type of residence. Type of residence is an extensively edited version of the information that was coded in the field. An effort was made to resolve discrepancies between what the mother reported in her Youth interview and what the interviewer coded for the YA interview, but some inconsistencies remain between this variable and the usual residence child variable found in the Child data set. A comparable set of constructed variables also exists for the 1996 Young Adult.

NLSY79 Child Documentation

The NLSY79 Child and Young Adult (and main Youth) data files on CD-ROM are each documented by a codebook that lists each variable and briefly describes its content. Each codebook entry contains the coding categories for the variable, frequency distributions, minimum and maximum values, and any special notes.

The main Youth and Child/Young Adult datasets on the CD are also linked to topical “Areas of Interest” (formerly called Record Types) which specify the topical location of the variable on the CD-ROM. Since the Child and Young Adult cases reside on the CD as one merged file, users are urged to use caution when searching or selecting “Child” versus “YA” variables. For example, users browsing the topical “Areas of Interest” indexes will find both CHILDCAR and CHDCARE. The former contains all the questions from the Young Adult

CAPI questionnaire related to use of childcare for their children. The CHDCARE index holds all information drawn from the mother's main Youth record related to the childcare experiences of the NLSY79 children, including the early experiences of the children who are now Young Adults.

In addition to the codebooks, variable descriptions, and search indices on the CD, CHRR provides the following materials as additional documentation for the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult data:

- (1) the Child CAPI and self-report data collection instruments used in the field,
- (2) the Young Adult CAPI and self-report questionnaires,
- (3) the NLSY79 Young Adult attachments,
- (4) NLS CD-ROM Guide,
- (5) *Research Using NLSY79 Data on Fertility, Child Care, & Child Development*, NLSY79 Maternal & Child Bibliography Series, No. 1
- (6) *Child Assessment Research*, NLSY79 Maternal & Child Bibliography Series, No. 2, and
- (7) the NLSY79 Child Handbooks 1986-1992.

NOTE: Users should make sure that their supply of documentation includes any errata sheets or users notes that contain corrections and updates to the data files on the CD-ROM. The full set of user documentation is listed in a document on the CD. User update information is available from NLS User Services (614) 442-7366 or usersvc@postoffice.chrr.ohio-state.edu, mailing address listed at the end of this document.